Protecting our Legacy Together

BC Parks’ Future Strategy:
Securing our natural legacy through innovation, sustainability and partnership
“Allowing all British Columbians the opportunity to be partners in protecting our legacy will help our parks system to evolve into timeless natural treasures that our children can enjoy and of which we can all be proud.”
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“British Columbians of all ages and backgrounds consider B.C.’s parks and protected areas among the crown jewels of our province and one of the greatest things about living here.”
Message from the Premier of British Columbia

Some of my happiest memories as a child and as a parent were born in British Columbia’s natural spaces. These are magical places that define our province, allow us to decompress and grow as unique individuals, and drive home the importance of conservation.

I am not alone. British Columbians of all ages and backgrounds consider B.C.’s parks and protected areas among the crown jewels of our province and one of the greatest things about living here. They also attract visitors from far and wide who help create jobs and growth. But they should not be taken for granted. We have a duty—all of us—to help shape our parks’ future so they can adapt to the challenges of the 21st Century.

The BC Parks Future Strategy is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for British Columbians to unite behind a goal we all share: to protect and enhance our parks and protected areas so they will thrive in the future. To achieve this goal, we have a lot of work to get done, but we can do it if we work together.

This vision outlines a blueprint for an accessible, diverse parks system that can be enjoyed by those of all ages and abilities. As you read it, you will be constantly reminded of the many elements involved in maintaining our world-class parks system so families can enjoy them. There are also opportunities that we have not really explored, such as involving British Columbians of all walks of life—city dwellers, rural neighbours, First Nations communities—more directly in the support and direction of our parks.

At the heart of the BC Parks Future Strategy is our desire to empower British Columbians to become part of the solutions that will keep our parks thriving for generations. The B.C. government is looking forward to doing its part to create the foundation upon which you can help build and support our parks.

Together, we can secure a legacy of beautiful natural spaces that will create even more beautiful memories well into the future.
"Over 14 percent of our province is located within provincial parks and protected areas. BC Parks is responsible for making sure these natural spaces are clean, safe, accessible and ready for families to enjoy."
Message from the Minister of Environment

British Columbia has been blessed with spectacular natural spaces in every corner of the province. Our mountains, streams, lakes, oceans, beaches and forests are not just lovely to look at, but they are part of who we are as British Columbians. That is why we call them “super, natural.” They bring families together. They inspire art, music and literature. They protect our delicate biodiversity balance and ecosystems. They make us appreciate that we all have a role to play in protecting our environment. They are proudly shared with millions of visitors from around the world who only wish they could enjoy them in their backyard.

Over 14 percent of our province is located within provincial parks and protected areas. BC Parks is responsible for making sure these natural spaces are clean, safe, accessible and ready for families to enjoy. BC Parks also leads stewardship and conservation efforts in these parks and protected areas so that our children and theirs may enjoy them as much as we do.

For 105 years now, our beautiful parks and protected areas have been inspiring us. British Columbians from all walks of life have also done their part helping BC Parks fulfill its mandate as dedicated volunteers. This includes First Nations, who have taught us that respecting the land and water and the life they support is our first duty. From these spaces flow our livelihood and legacy we pass on to our children.

The first duty of the B.C. government is to ensure citizens and future generations have the tools and resources to protect our parks and protected areas, allowing them to flourish into the future. That duty is at the heart of the BC Parks Future Strategy. Its main objectives are to expand our stewardship programs and give British Columbians a more active role in securing our natural legacy.

The BC Parks Future Strategy is an opportunity to move forward as partners to achieve our shared goals. These include bolstering our commitment to conservation, further embracing First Nations culture and history, and keeping our province on track for a low-carbon future. In short, we want to empower British Columbians and future generations to help protect this legacy together.

British Columbians deserve a bigger role in how our parks, protected areas and natural treasures evolve and improve. We already know they are popular and enduring. This is our plan to ensure they stay that way.
Protecting our Legacy Together
Boya Lake Provincial Park
BC Parks Today

Adapting to embrace the future

British Columbia established its first provincial park in 1911 as a public trust for people to enjoy outdoor recreational activities. BC Parks’ legislative mandate gradually expanded to include ecological management and conservation. Today, B.C. has the highest percentage of its land base dedicated to protected areas of all provincial Canadian jurisdictions.

Here is where BC Parks stand today:

- Approximately 14 million hectares of protected areas, or 14.4 percent of B.C.’s total land mass; less than 2 percent of this area has been developed for recreation such as campsites, day-use areas, roads, trails, interpretive centres and lodges;
- 1,032 separate protected areas, including 643 parks, 156 conservancies, 148 ecological reserves, two recreation areas and 83 designations under the Environment and Land Use Act;
- More than 230 parks are accessible to people with disabilities;
- More than 57,000 hectares added to the protected areas system in 2014-15;
- Approximately 10,700 campsites accessible by vehicle; 2,000 hike-in campsites in the backcountry;
- 6,000 kilometres of hiking trails;
- Well over half of all British Columbians use a provincial park each year; 78 percent of all camping visitors are British Columbians;
- Over 23.8 million visits were made to a BC Parks protected area in 2015-16.

In fulfilling its mandate and mission, BC Parks aims to open the door even wider to public engagement in our ongoing efforts to deliver world-class conservation and recreational experiences. In doing so, we are pursuing innovative initiatives designed to improve our facilities while ensuring there is stable and sustainable funding to keep our parks clean, safe, accessible and beautiful. By building on grassroots efforts and partnerships, our parks will remain a lasting legacy for future generations.

Initiatives to build enduring public partnerships will be the foundation for securing the future legacy of BC Parks’ treasures. Every British Columbian should be able to play a role in helping protect our natural spaces. The BC Parks Future Strategy is designed to make sure everyone has the opportunity to support a strong and innovative system of parks and protected areas.
BC Parks Tomorrow

Delivering excellence as demand increases

We are very proud of what BC Parks has built and accomplished over the last century. Thanks to the hard work of our staff, volunteers, park operators, First Nations partners, and park lovers, we have helped protect our natural wonders, endangered species and their habitats, fight climate change, and unlock the wonders of the natural world and outdoor adventure for future generations.

As the number of people who enjoy our parks and protected areas grows, so has the challenge of making sure these spaces are protected, safe, clean and accessible. Our success has brought more demand to accommodate more people, programs and facilities. The greatest single challenge facing BC Parks is implementing a long-term plan in which we can meet our obligation to secure our natural legacy for a growing number of users in a financially sustainable way.

Innovative partnerships and investment are essential to meet this challenge and ensure the world’s finest array of diverse natural beauty is conserved while still accommodating more visitors, programs and facilities in the future.

Another challenge facing BC Parks is meeting the demand to improve our facilities, making sure they are accessible to outdoor lovers of all abilities. We are committed to ensuring the accessibility of our parks and protected areas so that they can be enjoyed by all.

The financial pressures that accompany these challenges mean BC Parks must take a fresh look at how we can best deliver the things that British Columbians expect of us: enhanced protected areas to enjoy; more clean and safe campsites; greater accessibility; and safe, up-to-date programs and facilities.

If we want a parks system of which we are proud and will stand tall in the future, it means that government and communities must work together and share the responsibility.

The BC Parks Future Strategy is an innovative plan for how we can work together to protect our legacy together. It provides a framework that will help us deliver what we all want for our parks and protected areas: healthy parks and protected areas; sustainable investment; stable operations and maintenance; more accessibility; and bolder partnerships with the people who make our parks great.
Opportunities

A strong foundation of innovation and passion

BC Parks already enjoys a strong foundation to secure its legacy: the support and admiration of British Columbians. It is this foundation, coupled with a clear vision of the legacy we want to leave, that will help build this future together.

BC Parks has a long history of building partnerships with passionate volunteers and nearby communities. These volunteers and local organizations and businesses help us take care of our parks, protected areas and facilities to make them among the best in the world.

The BC Parks Future Strategy will encourage more active participation through community partnerships to deliver one-of-a-kind experiences for our visitors. Our innovative engagement, marketing and funding initiatives will bring more people from a broader number of communities to the table with a larger role in helping our parks and protected areas evolve.

We also have an opportunity to embrace First Nations communities as partners in securing the legacy of BC Parks. First Nations have a rich history in British Columbia that predates European settlement by many hundreds of years. They are the original stewards of the land and water, and they now generously share these resources with the people who came after them. They have traditional knowledge and history to pass down about our natural world, and they deserve a stage to share it proudly on this next part of our journey together.

Aboriginal people’s connection to British Columbia’s protected areas is unique. A redefined future for parks must reflect Aboriginal communities’ spiritual and cultural ties to the lands and waters that make these areas special. The government of British Columbia has committed to building a strong government-to-government relationship with all First Nations, based on respect and recognition of Aboriginal title and rights. Our ability to embrace their historical and deep connection to these lands, and to facilitate opportunities for them to undertake their traditional activities and offer new economic opportunities within protected spaces, will be a critical part of BC Parks future and will become part of our commitment to achieving long term reconciliation.

The bottom line is that the BC Parks Future Strategy can only succeed with the support and participation of the people who love our parks and protected areas and want to see them thrive. This framework will give all our partners the tools and resources to help secure a lasting legacy for our parks and protected areas system.
Protecting our Legacy Together
Stone Mountain Provincial Park
BC Parks Future Strategy

Our Vision: Protecting our legacy together

The guiding principle of the BC Parks Future Strategy will be to protect the legacy of our natural heritage for future generations to enjoy as past generations have. To stay true to this principle, the BC Parks Future Strategy is committed to achieving a parks and protected areas system that is vibrant, relevant and inspirational through:

1. Ensuring our conservation mission is maintained and enhanced;
2. Providing outstanding recreation services and opportunities;
3. Expanding public partnership and engagement with BC Parks;

B.C.’s parks and protected areas are vital to the quality of life of all British Columbians. They play a critical role in conservation and environmental protection. They help the economy in isolated parts of the province. They provide families with lifelong memories and connections to our natural treasures. They contribute to the balance of the human spirit with nature, a critical element of Aboriginal culture. They help us to control the impact of climate change and to protect ecosystem services. And they inspire us to appreciate and protect these natural wonders for future generations.

While it is true that our natural wonders are priceless, they are also vital economic assets. They provide rural communities and workers with employment opportunities and attract tourists from all over the world. Like any asset, our parks will lose their value if we are not proactive in taking proper care of them.

Ask any teacher or parent whose student or child has spent any time at all in our parks, and they will tell you those times were among the most enriching experiences that child ever had. Our parks have served as classrooms for life’s most important lessons: how the natural world works, how to gain confidence and independence, and why we must protect the environment. Now more than ever, this classroom must stay open to everyone.

BC Parks has a responsibility not just to manage and enhance these special places, but to build a sustainable framework that will allow all British Columbians to enjoy our natural gifts for generations to come.
Here is what we know: B.C. is growing, and so is the demand to enjoy our parks and natural wonders; and there is tremendous support in all corners of B.C.—urban, rural, young and old—to share the responsibility for improving our parks.

There are several different innovative tools we can introduce to empower park lovers to have a direct role in helping improve our parks and establishing a sustainable financial foundation. That means our vision must include a partnership model that ensures every penny of funds raised go directly to supporting our parks.

Ultimately, a BC Parks Future Strategy that allows all British Columbians the opportunity to be partners will lead to an inclusive, innovative, sustainable and enviable parks system with something for everyone.

Our Vision: Sustainable Funding into the Future

BC Parks is not the only agency facing the challenge of dealing with dramatic growth coupled with uncertain funding. Parks agencies across Canada and around the world wrestle with how to fund the myriad of activities that support a popular parks system. B.C.’s challenges are magnified by the size of our parks system and its popularity among residents and other visitors who love the outdoors.

There is clearly a role for government to support parks through tax revenues. That is why a funding lift will be provided to support implementation of the BC Parks Future Strategy. But to make sure BC Parks funding is sustainable and reliable in the future, we are introducing new and innovative revenue sources.

These revenues will be entirely dedicated to supporting the mission of BC Parks and its legacy: conservation, recreation, accessibility and bringing people together. Here are some of the initiatives we are planning to support that legacy:

License plates:
In partnership with the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), BC Parks will introduce a series of specialty license plates depicting scenes from our parks and recreational areas. Vehicle owners who order them will show their support for our parks while also ensuring additional funds are directly invested in new programs and improvements.

Sponsorships:
Sponsors and partners that share our commitment to conservation, recreation, education and biodiversity will play an important role in BC Parks’ future. Businesses, associations and community groups can help support our parks in several ways: monetary gifts, sponsoring specific programs, in-kind gifts supporting facility development, or cross-promotional partnerships. We welcome partners with a solid environmental track record that share our values and commitment to preserving and enhancing our brand and vision.
Protecting our Legacy Together

McDonald Creek Provincial Park
Personal Giving:
B.C.’s parks and natural areas are famous for offering some of the finest outdoor experiences to be found anywhere in the world. Park visitors seek out these special places to experience peace and tranquility with loved ones, explore the natural world, and pursue outdoor adventure. These experiences are often life-changing events for the millions who visit our parks. For those who would like to voluntarily pay tribute to the special place our parks may hold in their memories, they will soon be able to do so more easily. Personal gifts can be directed to support educational programs, new or improved hiking trails, or perhaps a conservation project in a favourite park. Giving can take the form of a personal bequest from an estate or a simple monetary donation to a specific park through the new BC Parks online credit-card portal.

Loyalty card:
BC Parks has a very loyal customer base and is a popular and respected brand. In 2015-16, BC Parks had over 23 million visitors, and its website receives over 4.3 million unique visits annually to complement a strong following on social media platforms.

BC Parks will be studying the potential for a loyalty-card program that could provide discounts to our users for recreational consumer items, while at the same time generating additional revenue to support parks programs and maintenance. In selecting partners for such a program, we seek out firms with a strong environmental mission and commitment to stewardship consistent with the BC Parks brand.

Introducing the BC Parks Foundation:
The BC Parks Foundation is an innovative funding tool that all British Columbians who love our parks can rally around. The Foundation is at the heart of our plan to secure a stable, dedicated, long-term revenue source to support BC Parks Future Strategy initiatives. The B.C. government will launch the Foundation with a $5 million endowment, then opening the door for individuals, families, community groups and firms to contribute directly. Every penny raised will be spent on promoting and enhancing the experience in BC Parks.
Conservation and Stewardship

B.C. has a wealth of natural treasures and biodiversity that exists nowhere else in Canada. Since 2001, B.C. has added more than 2.3 million hectares of land to the provincial parks and protected areas system to ensure that key areas are protected for the future. Now, over 14 percent of the provincial land base is protected. Looking after our parks ensures that B.C. remains the “super natural” landscape we have come to expect, and continues to draw visitors from around the world.

The first duty of BC Parks is to make sure our natural treasures are protected by conservation measures so that wildlife and wild habitats can flourish. In carrying out this responsibility, BC Parks must make sure that these parks are managed as part of a broad, resilient ecosystem that can confront and control the impact of climate change.

BC Parks prides itself on providing more than passive management and conservation. Along with our partners, we are going to implement enhanced conservation management initiatives such as ecosystem restoration projects, invasive plants and animals control measures, and programs to support species at risk.

Boots on the Ground

The BC Parks Futures Strategy will increase the number of park rangers across the province. The conservation efforts of ranger staff—and the benefits that flow from them—are the essence of what makes our parks so popular and inspiring. These duties range from managing and monitoring the ecological impact on habitats and species, to maintaining trails and campsites, to ensuring park users’ safety and security. Ranger staff are the essential “boots on the ground” that enable parks and protected areas to be open to the public. Without them, our conservation and recreation programs would be limited, as well as access to the parks themselves.

Park Rangers ensure our conservation and recreation programs are well managed and delivered efficiently. They are the front line in protecting the natural gifts found in our parks and protected areas. They also help to pass down timeless shared cultural values to park visitors, including the importance of working together to keep our parks safe, clean and in balance with nature. Rangers work closely with nearby communities and other agencies to make sure good stewardship practices are followed, and enforce laws when necessary. Their paramount duty is protecting the park experience so that we can all enjoy these magnificent gifts for generations to come.

Protecting World Heritage

The great cities of Europe may have their cathedrals, monuments and battlefields; we have treasures that are even more awe-inspiring, but they also require more care and protection if they are going to remain our gift to the world.

The Canadian government recently announced it will be supporting efforts to showcase our most enduring landscapes as UNESCO World Heritage sites. This provides B.C. with the opportunity to have our most treasured areas recognized among the most important on the planet. Whether it is the majestic beauty of
the Ancient Forest/Chun T’oh Whudujut Provincial Park near McBride, the one-of-a-kind Pocket Desert of the south Okanagan, the naturally important wonders in Wells Gray Provincial Park near Clearwater, or the world-renowned Great Bear Rainforest on the central and north coast, we have several world-class parks and protected areas that could be nominated.

Working toward achieving the honour of UNESCO World Heritage recognition gives us an opportunity to focus our conservation efforts and recognize the role they play in preserving our natural legacy. To be successful, however, BC Parks and the community at large must work together to make sure these conservation efforts are sustainable and innovative.

**Discover BC Parks: Connecting People to Nature**

A journey to a provincial park or protected area can begin on a smart phone, a computer, in a library, or at a parking lot. The BC Parks Future Strategy will include the launch of an exciting array of outreach tools designed to engage the public in a modern and relevant fashion. The Discover BC Parks program will open the door to the world of BC Parks through interactive mobile learning spaces, mobile apps, online activities and projects for children, and volunteer-led outreach programs.

Our goal is to inspire people who might not normally seek out a BC Parks experience to discover the wonders of our parks and protected areas.

**Helping Understand and Fight Climate Change**

British Columbia is proud to be a leader in the fight to control climate change and create a low-carbon future for our province. BC Parks and its conservation efforts are an important contributor to achieving our goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and reducing the harm they cause.

Our parks and protected areas are living laboratories that allow us to measure and monitor the impact of climate change on ecosystems and wildlife, and make sure provincial policies and programs are making a difference. We will work with researchers and academics to collaborate on climate change research in our parks and protected areas.
2 Recreational Facilities and Accessibility

About two percent of all parks and protected areas are developed to accommodate human activities. The rest is dedicated to enhancing biodiversity. But the success of our parks and protected areas depends on broad public support and remaining relevant to current trends. This means we must be innovative in sharing these experiences, inspiring people to return, and convincing them to encourage their friends and neighbours to enjoy the province’s natural glory.

The BC Parks system provides outstanding front-country and back-country recreational services and experiences. The demand for these services grows dramatically every year, and we are faced with the challenge of accommodating more visitors with the same amount of resources.

BC Parks is committed to boosting its campsites and visitor services across the province, but in doing so we must also seek out innovative partnerships with our user groups to achieve a financially sustainable operational model. By balancing these two efforts, BC Parks can deliver more and better visitor experiences, as well as a stable framework for future growth while keeping B.C.’s parks accessible and affordable for all British Columbians.

Through the following initiatives, BC Parks aims to expand access to its recreational features and improve them.

Adding New Campsites

Camping is one of the most popular recreational activities we make possible. BC Parks maintains and operates 10,700 campsites distributed across 270 front-country campgrounds. The highest demand for campsites occurs in the most populous regions: the Lower Mainland; Vancouver Island and the Okanagan.

To accommodate this demand, our reservation system will be improved for the 2017 camping season to ensure fair and equitable access to camping opportunities. We are making changes that will curb unfair booking practices affecting other campers. We are also testing a shortened maximum length of stay in a few high-demand parks.

Ultimately, the best way to boost camping opportunities is to increase the number of campsites. That is why the provincial government is committed to building over 1,900 new sites over the next five years through an investment of up to $23 million. These new sites will be in provincial parks as well as recreation sites. Many of these sites in provincial parks will be tailored to recreational vehicles, an important segment of our visitor profile especially in light of our aging population.

By increasing the number of RV sites we will also open up more camping opportunities for seniors and other RV enthusiasts in the shoulder seasons.

In addition to investing in more campsites, BC Parks will also be adding sites at some smaller high-demand campgrounds, investing in improvements like new toilet and shower facilities, and improving underutilized campgrounds close to more popular ones. All of these measures will increase the supply of campsites while relieving pressure on high-demand campgrounds by providing desirable alternatives nearby.
Delivering Safe and Clean Facilities

British Columbian families and outdoor lovers have come to expect that our facilities are safe and clean. The BC Parks Future Strategy is determined to ensure attractive, safe and clean facilities remain a hallmark of the BC Parks experience.

Many facilities like campgrounds, toilets, showers and playgrounds are exposed to harsh weather in the winter and are located in isolated areas. Some trails need to be maintained year round to make sure there is minimal risk of injury. Visitors expect a first-class experience when they visit, so the work must be done right. High quality features and facilities not only provide an enjoyable experience, they encourage visitors to return as well as to share their positive experiences with others. Make no mistake: safe and clean facilities are a big selling point with tourists and regular visitors. In addition to continuing our annual investment in front-country facilities, we will be investing more capital and operating funds to maintain back-country facilities and trails. By making preventative maintenance a priority, BC Parks can extend the life of its current facilities.

BC Parks Accessibility Guarantee

People living with disabilities should be able to enjoy outdoor activities with no barriers. The BC Parks Future Strategy is dedicated to delivering improved accessibility to our recreational facilities. That is why we are committing to a program of accessibility audits and assessments of our facilities so that over time, front-country campgrounds and day-use areas can all have accessible campsites, toilets, natural features and parking areas.

BC Parks will seek out partnership opportunities with disability advocates to fund enhanced accessibility features in each of the five park regions. Our new campground developments will also incorporate accessible design standards. In addition, the BC Parks website will be improved to support the needs of those living with disabilities.

Guaranteeing improved accessibility means that many more people and their families can enjoy our parks and protected areas. It also means that our commitment to accessibility can be promoted worldwide, increasing tourism by attracting people living with disabilities.

New Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Attracting new and returning visitors and encouraging public partnerships means BC Parks must focus on broadening the experiences we offer. The BC Parks Future Strategy calls for a dynamic and innovative recreation strategy to identify and develop new recreational offerings such as marine trails, back-country cabins and hut-to-hut circuits, mountain biking circuits, and enhanced electrification and servicing. We will develop these initiatives in partnership with recreation and tourism groups across the province. With more reasons to visit B.C. parks, visitors will stay longer, helping the local economy and encouraging their friends to join them.
Public Partnership and Engagement

Throughout our history, BC Parks has attracted volunteers, businesses, environmental advocates and community organizations to make sure our protected areas are managed well. Many of the innovations and upgrades we have implemented have come as a result of feedback from our stakeholders. It is fair to say that no other government agency enjoys as much support and goodwill from the community at large as BC Parks. We would like to open our doors further to public participation in the direction and funding of our parks through these initiatives.

For BC Parks to remain relevant in the future, it is essential that we strengthen, and in some cases, rebuild our connection to communities. While there are many dedicated volunteers and stakeholder organizations that actively support the parks system, the connection to communities must be cultivated to make parks a part of the fabric of the communities with which they are linked.

Parks Advisory Council

Charting a path for our parks in the 21st Century is a shared mission. To ensure we make the right choices for the BC Parks system, we require the collective efforts and wisdom of park lovers. A Parks Advisory Committee will serve to provide the Minister of Environment with the opportunity to engage knowledgeable stakeholders on the BC Parks Future Strategy, both in terms of defining its goals and successes, and building a path to achieve them. As part of its mandate, the advisory council will provide feedback on: the long term vision for BC Parks; new and alternative revenue sources consistent with BC Parks brand and vision; redefining our relationship with First Nations; and enhancing community involvement in BC Parks.

Community Connection: Enhancing Volunteer, Public and Partner Engagement

In order to open the doors to more public participation and volunteerism, the BC Parks Future Strategy proposes hiring Community Liaison Rangers to establish relationships and partnerships across the province with local governments, community groups, businesses, tourism associations, advocacy organizations, school groups, and the public at large. These liaisons will head volunteer committees that will seek out feedback and public participation in the operation of local area parks. These regional liaison committees will focus on development of a shared vision for these local parks and protected areas through volunteerism, public outreach, sponsorships, partnerships, and citizen science.

These liaisons and committees will be designed to build enthusiastic local support for park activities. They are expected to be at the vanguard of expanding public participation in park operations.
BC Parks Foundation: the Heart of our Future Legacy

A BC Parks Foundation is an innovative tool to raise money and community awareness that has been hugely successful in other jurisdictions. Through this foundation, community groups, businesses and individuals can come together and have a voice in BC Parks priorities. This foundation can enable individuals, businesses and groups to promote their own charitable campaigns to benefit B.C.’s parks. Most importantly, these supporters can be assured that every dollar they contribute will be spent on promoting and enhancing the experience in BC Parks.

A well-managed foundation - starting with a generous endowment of $5 million and community support - should easily have the ability to generate several revenue streams.

Our parks are not just another government asset; they are a public trust that we all have a stake in protecting. The BC Parks Foundation should serve as the beating heart of the legacy we hope to build together. Without it, the financial sustainability and community support for BC Parks is thrown into question. With it, an endless stream of opportunities is possible. It is a vehicle for regular British Columbians to make our parks system better, and encourage others to join in.
Recognizing Aboriginal People’s Connections to the Land

First Nations have historically used much of the land that makes up B.C. parks for traditional practices such as hunting and fishing. We acknowledge this land serves as the natural foundation on which these practices are built. The BC Parks Future Strategy can serve as a framework to bring our two communities closer together as we work toward honouring and protecting the natural world, and ensuring that world remains strong as a legacy for the future generations of all communities. This framework would begin with building relationships, rooted in common interests, then leading to meaningful initiatives, improved cultural programs, and a deeper recognition of Aboriginal values that are so inherently tied to these special places.

B.C. and Aboriginal people are making great progress in redefining their relationship as partners; but we still have a long way to go on the path to reconciliation. Through mutual respect and recognizing First Nations traditional cultural practices, we continue along this important journey, founded on shared goals and a celebration of our joint successes. We will continue to look for opportunities to highlight this cooperative and principled approach to our evolving partnership with each other, including celebrating First Nations heritage and cultural values in the future of BC Parks.

Embracing First Nations Relationships through Cultural Connections

Respect for First Nations traditions, culture and communities will be an important part of BC Parks’ future. That future includes more First Nations communities showcasing their heritage and cultural practices at BC Parks’ venues, educating those who share their passion and values on indigenous perspectives about the importance of protecting and celebrating the natural world.

These opportunities would provide avenues for First Nations elders and youth to reconnect with their culture and traditions, and connect other communities to their history and experience. Parks and recreational facilities would serve as the stage to promote indigenous culture honouring the spiritual links to First Nations’ ancestral lands.

Embracing First Nations Cultural Tourism

As an extension to efforts to establish greater cultural connections, BC Parks will invite First Nations to develop proposals for aboriginal cultural tourism opportunities in BC Parks. In this way, recreational facilities would serve as the stage to promote First Nations culture, share traditional practices, and tell the stories that honour their history and the spiritual importance of their ancestral lands.

The bottom line is that respect for our First Nations traditions and communities will be an important part of the future of BC Parks. We will work together with these communities to make sure that a stable and collaborative relationship flows from this commitment.